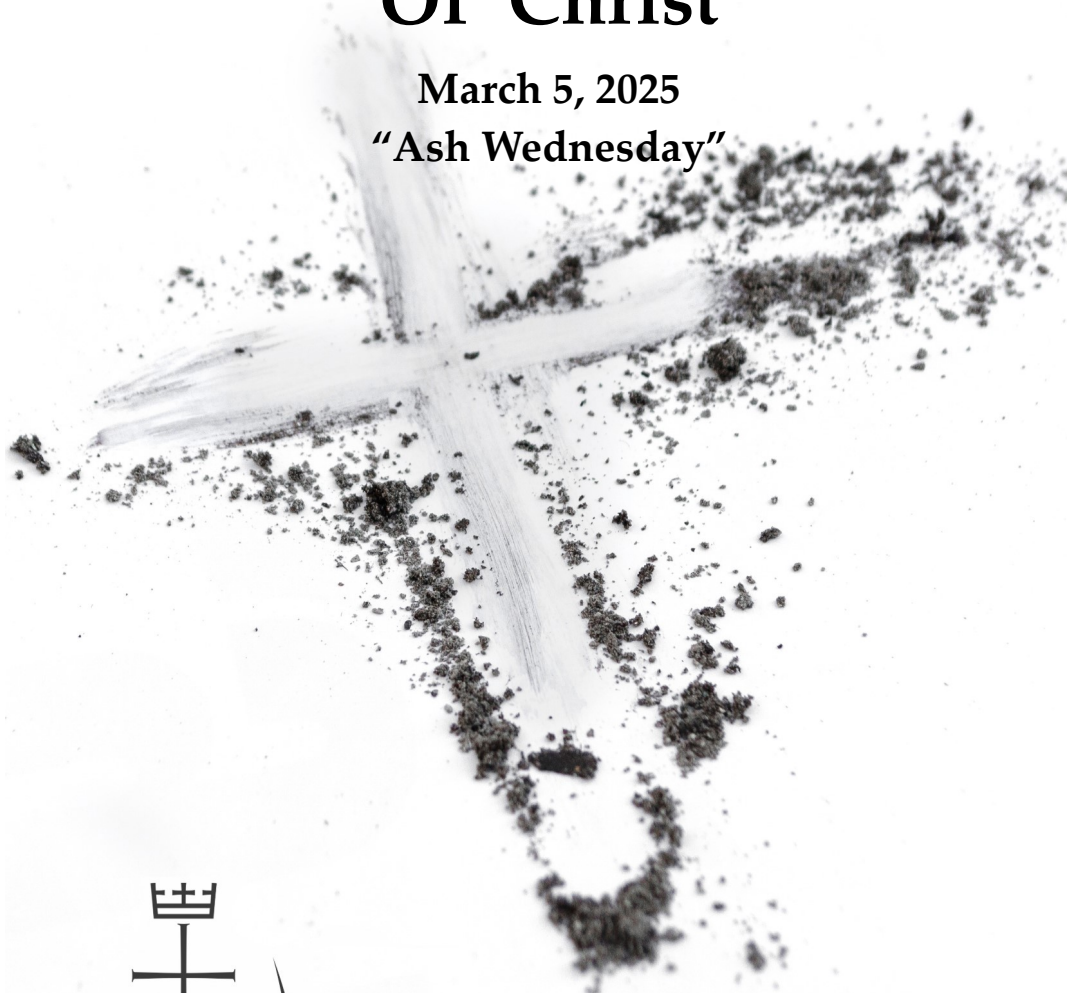


# Columbia United Church Of Christ

March 5, 2025  
"Ash Wednesday"



**CUCC**  
Columbia United Church of Christ

*Columbia  
United Church  
Of Christ*



*March 5, 2025      7:00 p.m. Worship      "Ashes to Ashes"*

*\*indicates that all are invited to stand, if comfortably able*

*"My God, My God,  
Why have You Forsaken Me?  
-Psalm 22:1*

Worship Summons	Genesis 2:4b-7 Genesis 3:19	Audrey Lasley (page #2)
Prelude	"Your Only Son "	Steve Jannetti Twila Paris

Bringing in the Light of Christ

\*Call to Worship Audrey Lasley

Friends and neighbors, in the middle of our busy week we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together as a faith community.

**We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love.**

From dust we are created in God's image and to God's good dust we shall return.

**With dust and oil we claim the mark of God's beloved creature.**

Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved.

**In daily practices of prayer and service, we will embark upon this Lenten journey.**

We follow Jesus, God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, in whom we see God's image most clearly.

**So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent. Come, let us worship God!**

\*Opening Hymn      "Lord, I Want to be a Christian"      #454

\*Litany of Confession and Assurance

Pastor Rick

Tonight, Ash Wednesday, begins our journey through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. We begin our journey carrying the mark of God's beloved.

In this vulnerable place, God whispers to us that we are made in the divine image and that faithfulness to that knowledge is all we need for the journey.

So let us ponder what new disciplines we may take on this Lent, in order to help us hear more clearly the stories of Jesus' extravagant love for all and to follow him more intentionally.

Let us pray...

Have mercy, tender God; forget that I defied You.  
Wash away my sin, and cleanse me from my guilt.

**I know my sins well, for they stare me in the face,  
Sins done to You alone before Your very eyes.**

We know that sin is simply separation; choices we make that separate us from You. As we center ourselves on Your Presence this Lent, we center ourselves on Your Truth.

**Teach me Your hidden wisdom.  
Wash me with fresh water, wash me bright and clean.**

Fill me with happy songs! Let the bones once bruised now dance.  
Shut Your eyes to my sin; make my guilt disappear.

**Creator, reshape my heart. God, steady my spirit.  
Do not cast me aside, stripped of Your Holy Spirit.**

Save me, bring back my joy, support me, and strengthen my will.  
I will teach Your Way and sing of Your Righteousness.

**Help me, stop my tears, and I will sing Your goodness.  
Lord, give me words, and I will shout Your praise.**

**In the name of Christ Jesus we come to You,  
confessing our sins of separation  
and praising Your name; Amen**

\*Prayer Response "Jesus, Remember Me"

*Jesus, Remember me . . .  
When you come into your Kingdom.  
Jesus, Remember me . . .  
When you come into your Kingdom.*

\*Assurance of Pardon

Pastor Rick

Know that God loves you, forgives you, welcomes you, and rejoices in you. I announce, therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and renewed!

**In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free!  
Thanks be to God forever more! Amen.**

\*Prayer Response

“Gloria Patri”

***Glory Be to the Father,  
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!  
As it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be;  
world without end! Amen, Amen!***

Children’s Time

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

Pastor Rick

*(Sung as children return to their seats)*

***I have decided to follow Jesus; (3x)  
No turning back, no turning back.***

***The world behind me, the cross before me (3x)  
No turning back, no turning back.***

Imposition of Ashes

*Ashes are placed on the forehead of all who choose as a part of the act of confession and as a sign of our acceptance of our own mortality and our penance. Come forward via the center aisle and receive the ashes; you may return by the side aisles.*

*Please bring your offering forward at this time, as well, and place it in the offering plates.*

You have come to this place to acknowledge Jesus and his life and death, as well as our own. While we wear the symbol of all death on our foreheads and hands, know in your hearts that this is not all there is. “Ashes to ashes and dust to dust” is the nature of our lives, but the true life is the “Alleluia” that we will shout 40 days hence. Have faith in the fire of Christ’s love in your life and work as you come forth remembering Christ’s death while living Christ’s Resurrection.

Prayer of Penance

Pastor Rick

**Almighty and everlasting God, who forgives the sins of all who are penitent, create and make in us new and humble hearts; that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our flaws, may obtain of you perfect remission and forgiveness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Psalter Lesson                      Psalm 22:1-11                      Audrey Lasley

*The Psalmist reflects on God's presence in times of trouble. Even when the psalmist feels God has forsaken them, God is still near, giving them strength. This is the psalm that Jesus is said to have repeated for strength while being crucified.* (page #452)

Gospel Lesson                      Mark 13:1-13                      Audrey Lasley

*Jesus challenges the idea that human constructs and ideas are mightier than God's plans, and tells the disciples that even the mightiest Temple will one day fall. As we contemplate our identity (dust to dust) we remember what matters most; our identity as God's people. All else is insignificant.* (page #825)

Anthem                      "Touch Me With Ashes"                      Celebration Singers  
Stacey Nordmeyer

Sermon                      "The Joy of Faith"                      Pastor Rick

\*Hymn:                      "Sweet Hour of Prayer"                      #505

\*Invitation to Communion

*As we gather at this table, we remember that as Jesus shared this meal with his friends, he expressed a message of inclusion for all. In like manner, this meal is open to everyone, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey; all are welcome to partake.*

Communion Prayer

Blessing the Children    "What Wondrous Love is This"                      #223

*During the hymn, our children are invited to come forward via the center aisle and receive a special blessing.*

Institution; Fraction; Distribution

*The ushers will serve you where you sit; all are invited to then serve one another. You may partake the elements when you receive them, or you may wait for Pastor Rick*

Communion Music                      "Largo"                      Steven Jannetti  
George Frederic Handel

\*Prayer of Thanksgiving

**In this season of Lent and in this meal, we remember even more diligently Christ's ministry on earth, dear God. We follow him. We fast with him. We join our hearts in the passion of his ministry and the promises of his life. Thank You, loving God, for claiming us as Your beloved. Thank You, gracious God for this bread and this cup; may they transform us so that we will indeed share it with others as we walk more closely with You.**

\*The Lord's Prayer *(spoken by the congregation)*

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

\*Benediction

\*Response: "Let There be Peace on Earth"

*Let there be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with me!*

*Let there be Peace on Earth;  
the Peace that was meant to be!*

*With God our Creator, Children all are we!*

*Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony!*

*Let Peace begin with me; let this be the moment now!*

*With every step I take let this be my solemn vow:*

*To take each moment and live each moment  
in peace eternally!*

*Let there be Peace on Earth; and let it begin with me!*

\*Postlude

"Ave Verum Corpus"

Steven Jannetti

*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*

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### Ash Wednesday at Columbia UCC

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, the forty days leading to Easter. It is a time for Christians to follow Jesus' life and death with the intention of strengthening their faith in God and widening their service in the ways of Jesus. We want to become more like Christ!

We shall participate in the blessing and imposition of ashes in our worship this evening. In the Hebrew Bible, ashes placed on one's body was a sign of mortality and also a symbol of turning and returning to God.

For Christians, the ashes marked on the forehead or hand with the sign of the cross are intended to signify our death to old worldly ways without God, and they represent acceptance and participation in the New Life Christ offers.

Our Ash Wednesday service is a bit more somber than our usual Sunday morning services. For a different kind of service, come back Sunday morning!

Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the 40-day period (excluding Sundays) that ends with Holy Week. Across the land, Christians from various denominations will commemorate the day by fasting, praying or participating in ceremonies in which ashes are crossed on their foreheads. Many will abstain from a particular food, beverage, or activity until Easter, in recognition of Jesus' great sacrifice. These rituals symbolize our connection to God and our acknowledgment that despite being created in God's image, we are mere mortals who sin and mess up more often than we get it right. This season gives us the opportunity to publicly embrace our shortcomings, or at least recognize the fact that we often don't measure up, faith wise. In our "survival of the fittest" - "may the best one win" society, it's not easy to admit that we are not perfect. Most of us know that perfection is impossible in human form, but let the tabloids, news magazines, shows, and celebrity profiles tell it: perfection can be bought in a bottle or Botox needle, discovered in a therapist's chair, or molded on a personal trainer's gym floor mat. It can be acquired at an elite university or in some of the boardrooms of the most powerful companies across the globe. The truth is, if we were perfect we might not feel a need for God. And surely we wouldn't give a second thought to Lent. Then, where would we find ourselves?

*"Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites. Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on God, God will lift you up and give you honor."* -James 4: 8-10 (New Living Translation)

